COMM103S “MEDIA ENTERTAINMENT”

SYLLABUS - Summer 2014

Time: Monday/Wednesday 10-11:50, 3 Units

Room: EDUC 334

Instructor: Louis Bosshart, Ph.D.

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Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description

This class is designed to study the impact of media entertainment on individuals, social groups, and whole societies. The diversity of entertainment will be explored with a systematic approach. The course will introduce psychological and social-psychological theories as well as empirical findings about media entertainment as a stimulus and a reception phenomenon. Why do people seek entertainment experiences to such an extent? Is there an evolutionary background related to human reproduction and survival efforts? What makes different genres and media so entertaining? What is the political impact of so-called nonpolitical media entertainment?

Media entertainment can be experienced as pure emotion, therapy, relaxation, escape, mood management, enjoyment, meaningful gratification, play, diversion, stimulation, and pleasure. Imaginative entertainment helps transcend boundaries of everyday routine, and people can learn some useful lessons from watching other human beings’ experiences, fictional or nonfictional, intellectual or emotional, between fear and hope.

Issues we will discuss:

- Defining entertainment;
- Theories of entertainment
- Dramatic and suspenseful content: mystery, crimes, adventures
- Violent content: horror
- Humorous content: comedies
- Romance, love
- TV-Series I: soap operas / telenovelas
- TV-Series II: sit-coms
- Sports content / media and celebrity
- Non-fictional entertainment: quiz shows, game shows, talk shows
- Animation: The Simpsons, South Park, etc.
- Reality-TV: reality shows, casting shows
- Music as entertainment

Course Details:

- Course Material: course reader with the required reading for class meetings.

- Course requirements:
  Attendance / Participation: Students have to attend and participate in all class sessions.
  Readings: Students are required to read the assigned material prior to class; a reader will be ready for purchase at the beginning of the class.
  Presentation: Instead of a written mid-term exam, students present at least one topic (definition, short history, contemporary examples, gratifications).

- Final essay:
  At the conclusion of the summer course, students are asked to write an essay. Details for this assignment will be given two weeks prior to the deadline (August 15th, 2014). The presentation counts 40%, the final essay 60% for the final grade;

Students with Documented Disabilities: Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the OAE as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 723-1066, URL: http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oae).